

Communication Tool Kit: Overview & Call to Action

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Produced by:

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Welcome to the National Center and State Collaborative Communication Tool Kit Module series. This series was written and produced by the University of Kentucky team including Dr. Jacqui Kearns, Dr. Jane Kleinert, Dr. Judy Page and Lou Ann Land, M.S..

The US Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs funded this work under a grant to the University of Minnesota. The contents of this work do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education and no assumption of endorsement by the Federal government should be made.

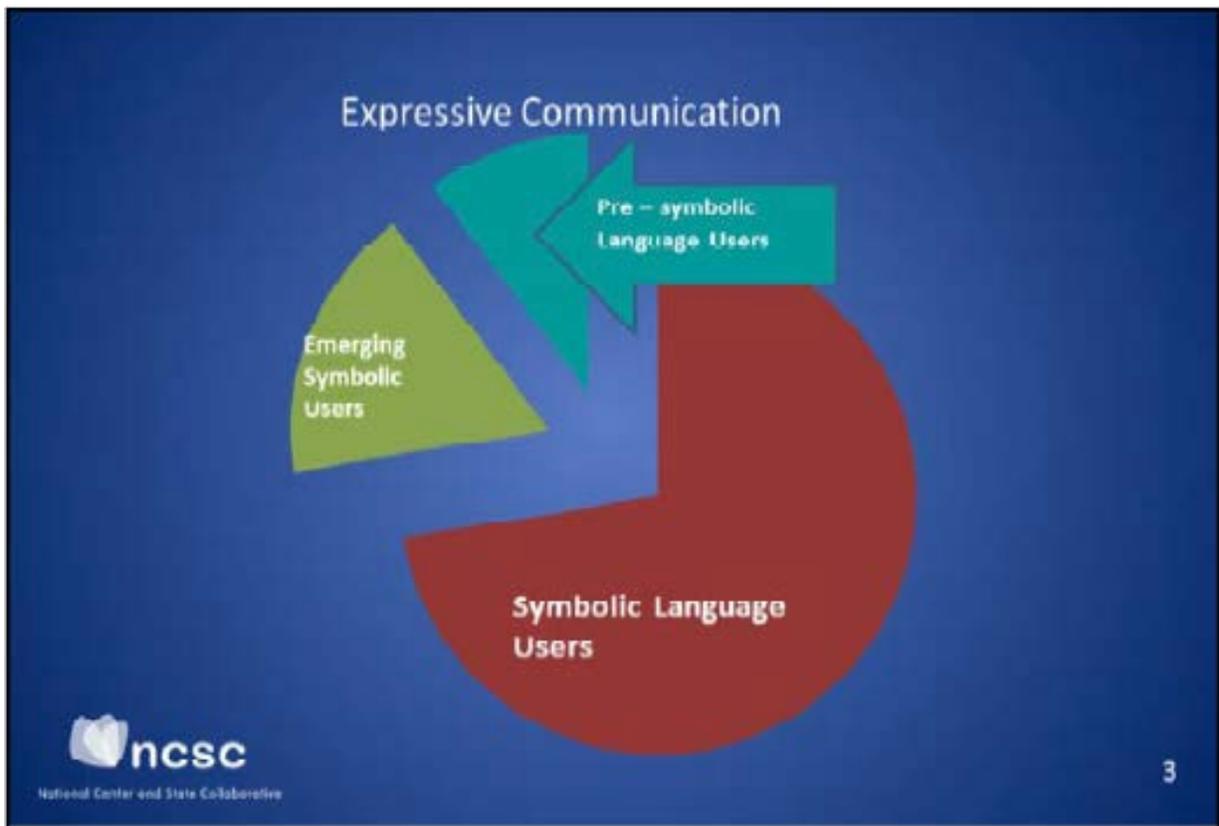


Welcome

I'm Dr. Kearns and I will be narrating this introduction to the NCSC Communication Tool Kit.

In this introduction, we will describe the data on communication for the population of students who take alternate assessments. We will share the data evidence-based practices for communication interventions. We will discuss the availability of AAC. We will issue a "call to action" for educators to provide students with communication intervention and the necessary communication supports. Finally we describe the tool kit resources including: the format, features, and options available in the seven tool kit modules.

Again, Welcome ! We hope this information is helpful to teachers and speech-language pathologists as you endeavor to improve communication results for students with significant cognitive disabilities.



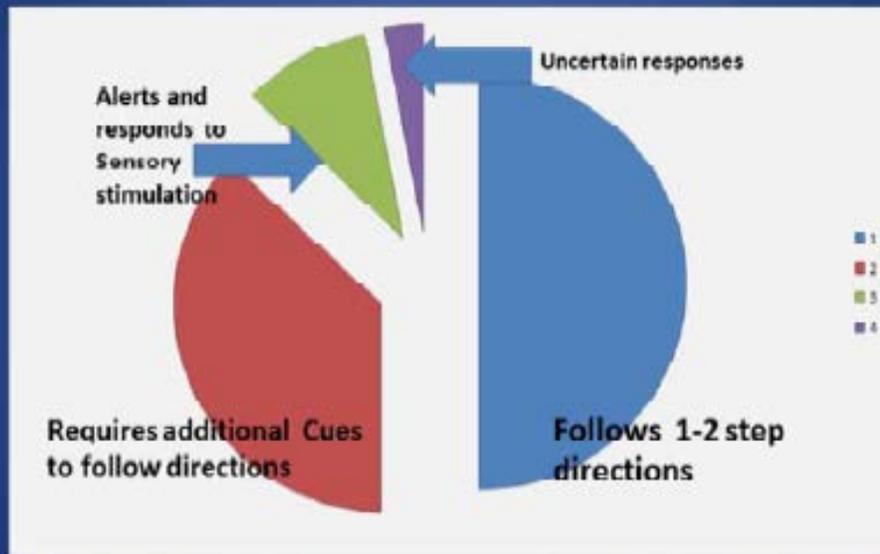
Expressive Communication is what a student can “say”, “sign”, or somehow indicate a message or intent. The pie chart indicates expressive communication of alternate assessment participants.

The majority (about 70% of students in the AA) indicated in red use symbolic communication receptively and expressively. These students are also emerging readers in that they read basic sight words and solve math problems with calculator support.

Approximately 15 - 18% of the remaining students indicated in light green are Emerging Level of Symbolic communication meaning that they use pictures, signs, gestures to communicate a variety of intents expressively and they demonstrate consistent receptive responses.

The remaining 10-12% use body movements, cries, and facial expressions that must be interpreted by caregivers.

Receptive Communication



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Receptive Communication is what the student understands. Following simple directions accommodating for motor, vision, hearing helps assess what a student understands. Students who present complex challenges are also most often underestimated in terms of their understanding.

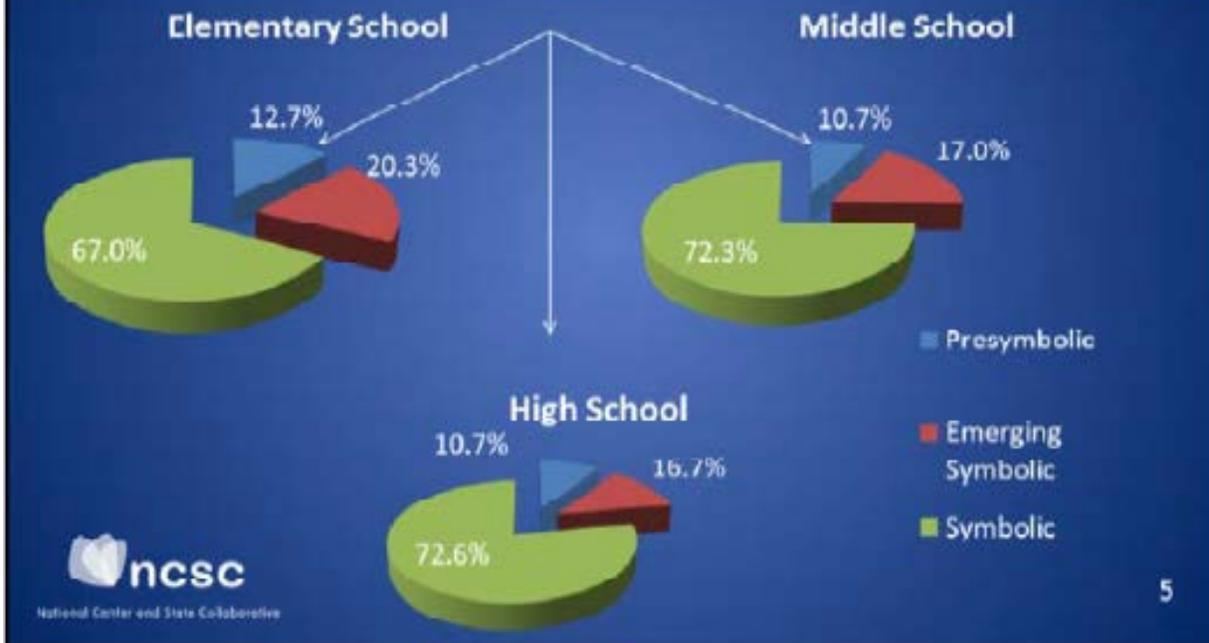
A student can have symbolic understanding or RECEPTIVE COMMUNICATION, but not use symbolic communication EXPRESSIVELY.

Approximately 50% understand 1-2 step directions and can complete them independently. An additional 35% require additional cues to follow directions. These students clearly have symbolic communication even though they may not yet have expressive forms that are understood. Approximately 13% alert to and respond to sensory stimulation, while approximately 2% were identified as having uncertain responses. Of the 13%, who alert and respond to sensory (auditory, visual, kinesthetic) likely also understand. The remaining 2% are identified as having uncertain responses. However, it is important to note – that caregivers will have observations that inform the assessment of student understanding. The bottom line here is that ALL Students Communicate – It IS our job to observe and

document the form and intent of their communications.

While these data are interesting, the look at these data across the grade-span is compelling.

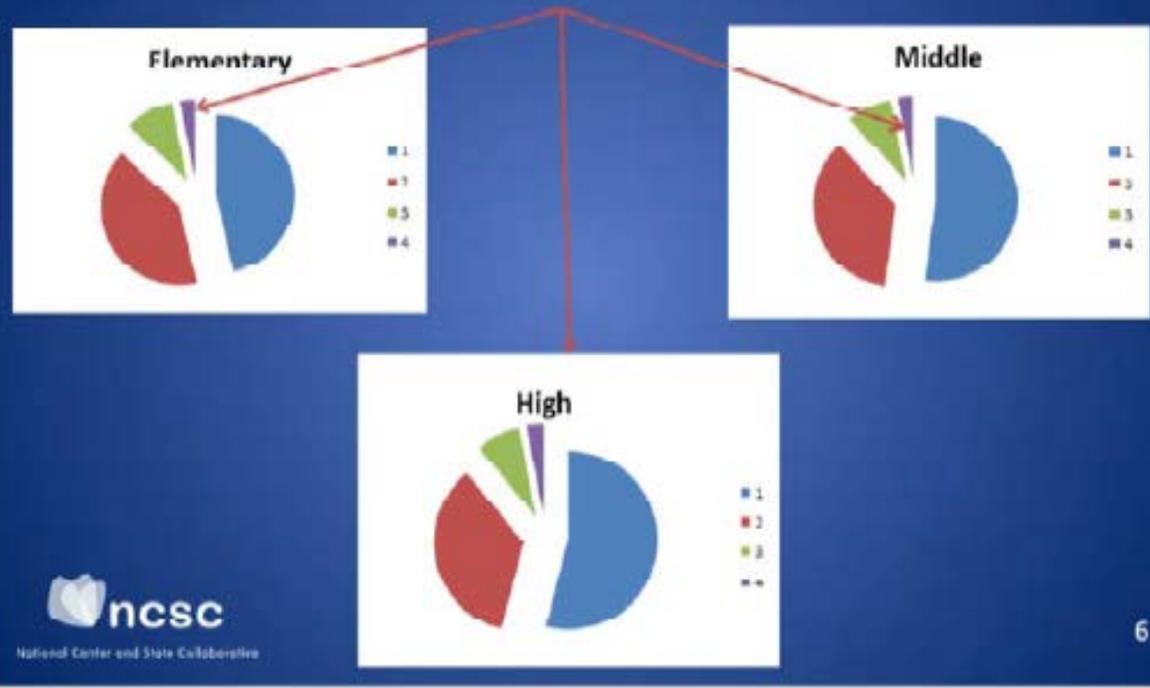
Expressive Communication Across Grade Bands



If we look at the expressive communication data from the NCSC Learner Characteristics Study across grades elementary to high school; we find that there is essentially little to no difference in the % of students symbolic communication from 3rd grade to high school. It is very important to note that approximately 10% of students are still considered pre-symbolic in expressive communication at high school in grade 10 or 11! What this implies is that after 11 years of school not including preschool, specially designed services, 10% of students may leave school without an expressive form of communication! Another 17% of students are still emerging in their expressive communication using a variety of forms to augment their oral speech.

Towles-Reeves, E., Kearns, J, Flowers, C., Hart, L., Kerbel, A., Kleinert, H., Quenemoen, R., & Thurlow, M. (2012). *Learner characteristics inventory project report (A product of the NCSC validity evaluation)*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, National Center and State Collaborative.

Receptive Communication Across the Grade-Span



Similar to the distributions in expressive communication, the distributions in receptive communication also reflect the same percentage of students at each level of receptive understanding. It is interesting to note that most students can follow directions independently, another significant percentage require additional cues. However, the problem these data uncover is that the percentages of students who alert and respond and those with inconsistent responses remain the same at middle and high school. One would assume that by high school, these categories would have significantly fewer students or none at all.

Communication Intervention Works

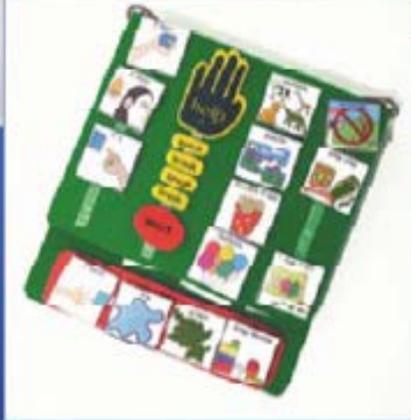


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116 articles published between 1987 and 2007 in refereed journals described a communication intervention involved one or more participants with severe intellectual and developmental disabilities. The evidence reviewed indicates that 96% of the studies reported positive changes in some aspects of communication. These findings support the provision of communication intervention to persons with severe intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Availability of AAC



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Research evidence suggests that AAC actually enhances the development oral speech as students hear the words more frequently. Never before have more augmentative alternative communication (AAC) devices been easier for teachers and students to use and available at reasonable cost. AAC doesn't have to be expensive, in many cases low tech devices work well. While potentially a barrier the regular use of these devices and systems by family and friends, teachers and peers, increases the probability that the student will use it too, thereby improving their communication overall.

The Importance of Communication

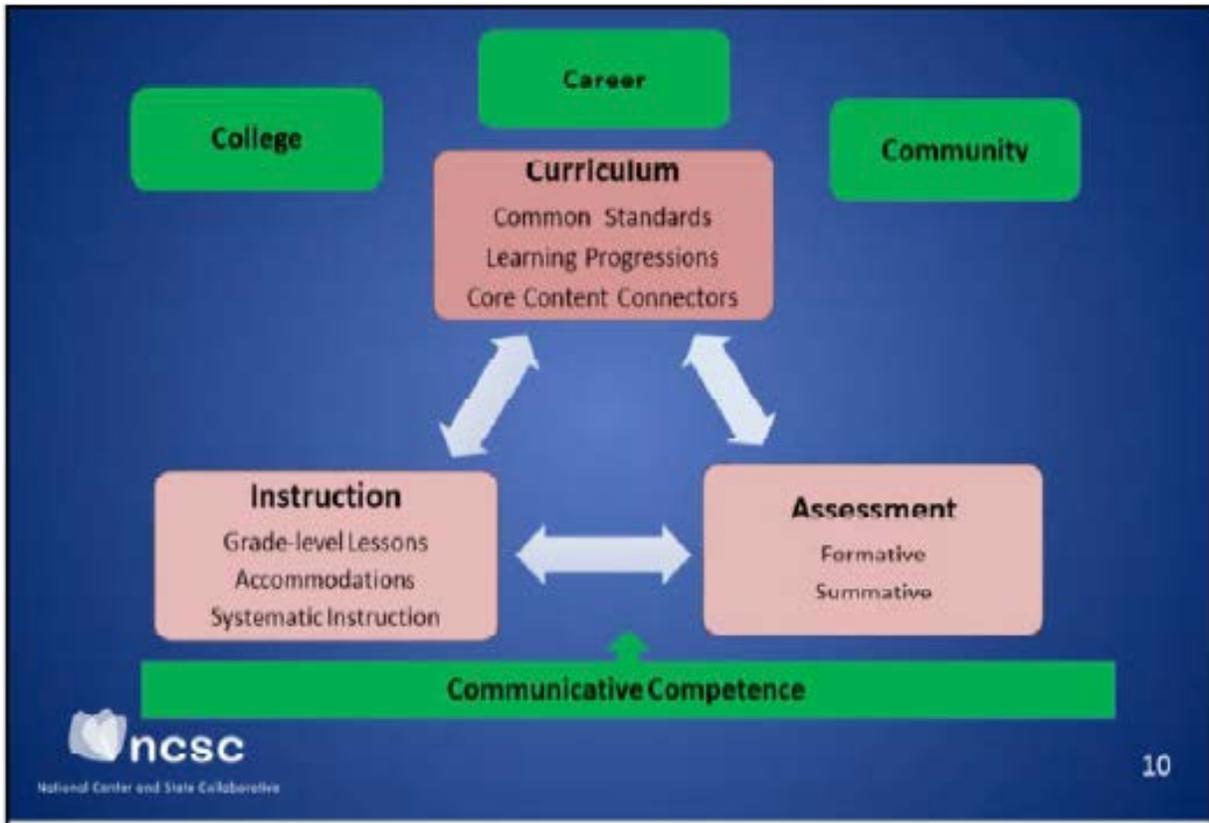


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The importance of communication for a safe, healthy, enjoyable life cannot be under-estimated. Indeed, the ability to communicate health information – pain. Imagine not being able to tell someone “it hurts”. The ability to share a joke, a secret, or a complaint with a friend – communication is necessary for social relationships. Finally, access to information... access to information is the foundation of what we do in school – help students learn and access information. Whether the information is when can I go home, what’s for lunch, where is Mom or Dad, or what happened to a favorite book character – ALL OF THESE are essential for a happy, safe, even productive life. Communication is far and away THE most important skill students need and is pre-requisite for language development. While all students do communicate – without intervention and AAC - the development of language needed for most of these intents as well as more complex information requests cannot happen.

Indeed, in an Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services issued a “Dear Colleague” letter in the Fall of 2014 - advising states and districts that access to communication was essential, the lack of which could be considered a civil rights issue.



The professional development and instructional triangle was introduced early on in the NCSC Community of Practice work groups as the framework for our work.

Communication is the foundation of this work with the ultimate outcome directed to the goal of College, Career, and Community Readiness.

All students have a communication system in place by Kindergarten and are able to learn and demonstrate knowledge using that communication system before they are assessed in the 3rd grade.

Post School Outcomes?

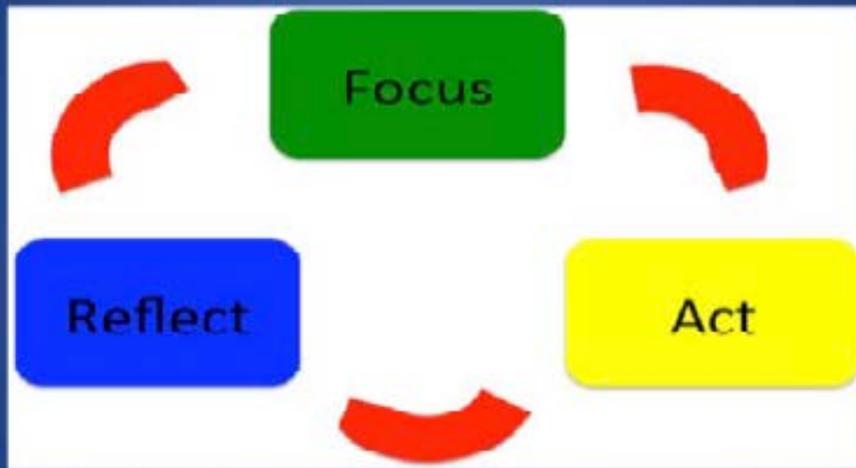


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Post school outcomes for students who leave school without communication are as might be expected dismal. Few to no options for employment, social relationships, or a life in the community. Indeed they are at increased risk for neglect – or in the worst case scenario – abuse.

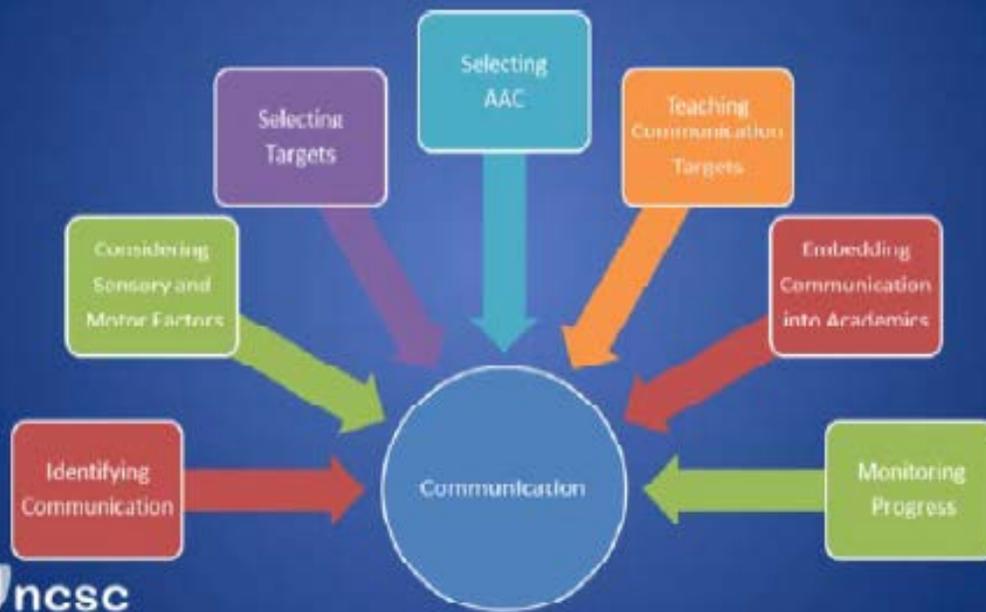
Call to Action



In order for students to engage in conversations with peers; shared interests, experiences, and communication are essential. We are aware of the challenges in standards-based general curriculum and the assessment and yet – we find that students are leaving school without THE most basic skill.

We hope that this presentation results in a reflection in the field about what we CAN do; Focuses time and attention on the skills we need to help students achieve this most basic skill; and causes action that will ultimately improve these results.

NCSC Communication Tool Kit



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This is a graphic illustrating the component parts in the Communication Tool kit. The component parts point to a circle with the word communication inside. The seven component parts include: identifying communication, considering sensory and motor factors, selecting communication targets, selecting AAC, teaching communication targets, and embedding communication into academics, and monitoring performance.

The Tool Kit



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This series of professional development modules includes seven individual communication topics with this orientation module, for a set of eight modules. Each module begins and ends with the same orientation and highlights the outcomes information in the current module. All of the modules have video clips illustrating important points about identifying, supporting, teaching, or monitoring communication.

The inclusion of video clips makes the files quite large, therefore if live in a low speed internet access area, you may experience a delay as the videos buffer. We apologize in advance for that problem. The series is produced in Adobe Presenter which allows the user to click on the notes tab, which has the entire script as well as captions for the video clips. This should assist those who need accessible features

Each module will have a set of quiz questions that focuses on the essential elements of the topic covered. These are embedded throughout the modules. Upon completion of the module with an 80% proficiency determination on the quiz. Please check with your state agency for details about using these materials for Continuing Education. We are currently in the process of applying for CEUs from

the American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA), please visit the site in order to access this information as soon as it is available.

Faculty



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- Human Development Institute
- University of Kentucky
- Educator



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The faculty for the communication tool kit are:

Dr. Jacqueline Kearns – The Human Development Institute at the University of Kentucky. Dr. Kearns’ experience is in education of individuals with severe disabilities, alternate assessments, and communication.

Dr. Jane Kleinert – Faculty at the College of Health Sciences at the University of Kentucky with expertise in speech language pathology.

Dr. Judith Page - Faculty at the College of Health Sciences at the University of Kentucky with expertise in speech language pathology and is the current acting president of the American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA).

Lou-Ann Land – Has a Master’s degree in the area of severe disabilities and works at the Human Development Institute at the University of Kentucky.

We are glad to provide these modules for you. We hope they help you as you endeavor to improve communication amongst students with severe cognitive

disabilities.

The following references were used in this module

- Kearns, J., Towles-Reeves, E., Kleinert, H., Kleinert, J. & Thomas, M. (2011). Characteristics of and Implications for students participating in alternate assessment based on alternate academic achievement standards. *Journal of Special Education*, 45(1), 3-11.
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